



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
June 21, 2011**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes: Bill Gray, Chair, made the following edit to May Meeting Summary Minutes: to remove "Partnership" when referring to Michael Higgs. Mike Subin, Commissioner, made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the May Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved with the edits. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Give An Hour – Eric Rogers, MSW, Executive Director

Eric Rogers began his military career by enlisting in the U.S. Army as a mental health specialist and combat stress control team member in the 10th Mountain Division at Ft. Drum, New York. After deciding to pursue his master's degree in social work at Howard University, he was accepted as an ROTC cadet with a Guaranteed Reserve Forces Duty scholarship. While earning his degree, Eric joined the 274th MP Company, DC National Guard, and also worked in various community mental health agencies. Upon completion of his degree, Eric was commissioned into the 11th Psychological Operations Battalion, Army Reserves. He also spent the next eight years pursuing a civilian career in the field of international adoptions.

PowerPoint Presentation:

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/hhs/ads/PDFs/giveanhour7erppt611.pdf

Give An Hour Public Service Announcement: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWcTtZKqpsE

Give An Hour (GAH) is a non-profit organization that provides free mental health services to U.S. military personnel and families affected by the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. GAH was founded in 2005 by Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, a psychologist in the Washington, D.C., area and a daughter of a World War II veteran. They provide counseling to individuals, couples and families, and children and adolescents. They offer treatment for anxiety, depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, sexual health and intimacy concerns, and loss and grieving. In addition to direct counseling services, their providers are working to reduce the stigma associated with mental health by participating in and leading education, training, and outreach efforts in schools and communities and around military bases. GAH is meant to be a supplement to services available through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

5,600 mental health providers are currently signed up to participate in the program, 258 of which are within a 50 mile radius of Rockville. The program averages 100 new providers every month.

Providers commit to one hour per week for a minimum of one year. Some providers donate more time. Individuals seeking services contact providers directly. The program is completely anonymous and they do not track user information. Individuals can meet directly with a provider or receive services via phone call. Since the program was founded, GAH's network of providers has given 38,000 hours of service. This number is thought to be severely undercounted as they only tally the number of hours that are returned via survey on a quarterly basis.

The program is funded through foundations and individual donors. GAH recently received a \$2M grant from Bristol-Myers Squibb to implement a project called the Community Blueprint that will assist community leaders in organizing care, and citizens and members of the military community in finding volunteer and service opportunities to engage civilian and military populations. Demo projects will be started in both in Norfolk, Virginia, and Fayetteville, North Carolina. There are eight categories: behavioral health, family strength, homelessness, employment, education, reintegration, financial/legal, and volunteerism. The first step is to establish a baseline by the end of summer, and then implement strategies to better network with the organizations. After two years, they will conduct a post-evaluation.

The need for mental health care services continues to grow. Over 2 million troops deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Persian Gulf since September 11, 2001. There is an average of 18 suicides a day among America's 25 million veterans. Family members are also in need of mental health services. For each military member deployed, 8 -10 family members are directly affected by his or her service. There are also higher rates of abuse and divorce in military families.

(Please note: From the National Institute on Mental Health - Suicide is a major, preventable public health problem. In 2007, it was the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S., accounting for 34,598 deaths.¹ The overall rate was 11.3 suicide deaths per 100,000 people.¹ An estimated 11 attempted suicides occur per every suicide death.²

GAH currently has 40 active partnerships, including American Psychiatric Foundation/American Psychiatric Association, AARP, American Red Cross, and Big Brothers Big Sisters, and is working to establish more. Eric asked Commissioners to help spread the word about the services offered by GAH and encourage mental health providers to donate their time.

Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, noted that 45% of the veteran population lives in rural areas.

Jane McCarthy, Commissioner, asked how GAH is identifying veterans to use the services. Robert Alvarez is the Military Outreach Officer for GAH and is responsible for linking service members and their families to GAH and related services that best fit their needs. It is a continuous challenge trying to connect with veterans.

Jane inquired as to the effectiveness of the program. She expressed her concern that so many programs are funded for veterans but they do not seem to help them. GAH maintains a level of anonymity and does not track individual user data. She recommends that the agency develop outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of their work.

Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, noted that Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is beginning to measure data in regards to suicide prevention.

Mike Subin, Commissioner, made a motion to write a letter to the County Executive requesting that he ask the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs and the Federal Department of

Veterans Affairs to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of their programs and services that operate in Montgomery County. Betsy added that the County has a contract with Mental Health Association to provide mental health and other referral services to County veterans and their families. It was suggested that the Commission ask the County Executive and the County Council to require that all service and program intake forms include a question regarding military service. This would allow for the County to begin tracking veterans-related data and we can get a better idea of the population we are serving.

Jackie Ogg made a motion to table Mike's motion until the next meeting to allow for further discussion. A vote was taken and passed 11 to 3.

IV. Update on Veterans Collaborative – Rich Schiffauer

Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, reported that the Memorandum of Understanding is currently being reviewed by the County Attorney's Office. Once it has been approved it will be sent back to the VA and services can begin at the Piccard Office.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report – Bill Gray and Jerry Godwin

Montgomery County is receiving 25 VA Supported Housing vouchers. Ken Barnum, VA Homeless Outreach Worker, has identified 74 veterans needing services. Those veterans who are in the most critical need will receive vouchers. A new social worker will be assisting Ken in locating housing and providing on-going case management. They will begin to process applications as soon as the funds arrive at Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC). Montgomery County was able to secure those vouchers through the advocacy of the CVA and Congressman Van Hollen.

Bill Gray and Betsy Luecking were invited to attend a Band of Brothers Honorary Dinner held at the Silver Spring Civic Building on June 13. Honorary guests included Band of Brothers Easy Company Veterans Ed 'Doc' Pepping, Al Mapre and Ed Shames.

VI. Unfinished Business

None.

VII. New Business

A sub-Committee was created to handle planning for Veterans Day, November 11, 2011. Commissioners Bill Gray, Jane McCarthy, Sharon Hodge, and Mike Subin will assist as well as various Silver Spring Civic Building Staff, Don Scheuerman, Department of General Services, and Jack Hewitt, World War II veteran. Betsy has reserved the Silver Spring Civic Building for the entire day. She will schedule a sub-Committee meeting for July.

VIII. Announcements

Roland Kauffman, Commissioner, reported that the Walk-A-Thon held by the incarcerated veterans at the Maryland Correctional Institute in Jessup raised \$1,200 for Pets for Vets, a program dedicated to providing a second chance for shelter pets by rescuing, training and pairing them with America's veterans who could benefit from having a companion animal.

Carl Bedell, Commissioner, announced that Hero Dogs will be hosting its [First Annual Golf Tournament](#) on September 26th at Norbeck Country Club. There are currently 12 wounded warriors and 6 golfers signed up to participate. Hero Dogs is a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to train and place service dogs with military veterans who have been injured and/or disabled while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Rich Fales, Commissioner, invited Commissioners to participate in the Takoma Park Independence Day Parade on July 4th.

Jim Campbell, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), reported that Congresswoman Donna Edwards representing the 4th District of Maryland will be a speaker at the MOAA luncheon on Wednesday, July 20th. The luncheon is held at Manor Country Club from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. and costs \$20.00. Commissioners interested in attending can contact Jim at jim@jrcampbelljr.name.

On May 21st, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) hosted a Veterans Information Fair at the Elks Lodge in Rockville. Approximately 100 veterans attended, many of whom had never filed for benefits with the VA before.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting:

Tuesday, September 20th, 2011, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room.

Respectively submitted:

Carly Clem, OSC

Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison